

## THE 2013 VOICE AWARDS By Lorraine Viade, Psy.D.



This is the 8<sup>th</sup> time I have attended the Voice Awards. Each year, I am more amazed at the people who are honored, on the work being done and on the recovery taking place all around us. Most of all, I am moved by the stories being told, whether on the silver screen or in the therapy room, these stories are what connect us to one another and to ourselves. Giving a voice to recovery is much more than a slogan. It is a way of life for those of us who have needed the support and compassion following a battle with depression or substance abuse. For those of us who hear voices that no one else can hear and for those of us whose highs and lows come and go like the tide crashing against the shores of our minds, these are our stories. They are ours as a society, ours as a family, ours both individually and collectively. These stories are told boldly, bravely and honestly. Whether as part of an entertainment production or just between friends, the alleviation of suffering in the world is our challenge and our responsibility. One of the panelist members said that she was not a consumer but, rather, a contributor — Amen. We can all give ourselves to the world in unique ways.

The television series honored were some of my favorites. Perception, The Newsroom, NCIS, Elementary, and Homeland deal frankly with schizophrenia, bi-polar disorder, post-traumatic stress, and substance use. These programs are making real differences in people's lives. The stories are engaging and the actors and writers have a real affinity for getting it right. These shows reinforce how important having support in the workplace and in your personal life are to recovery. With the ongoing help and support of leaders in Washington, D.C. and the ongoing commitment of our local leaders, there is much hope for recovery. Whether in a dark theater watching Silver Linings Playbook or at a screening of a documentary about the founder of A.A., we relate, we reach out, we are not alone.



The people who told their stories did so with grace and courage. They were not afraid to laugh or cry. They were comfortable in their own skin. Their stories are epic illustrations of the heroes with a thousand faces. Robert McKinley Gilmore, Sr., Drew Horn, Lauren Grimes, Mia St. John, William Kellibrew IV, Jennifer Constantine and Joseph Rogers may not be familiar to us in the same ways that Eric McCormack, Jonny Lee Miller, Claire Danes and Jeff Daniels might be, but their stories are so much more compelling because they really lived them. Kudos to those whose efforts to portray people who struggle with mental health and substance use conditions were honored at the awards, and thank you to everyone whose stories remind us of how interconnected we are. What inspiration you give us.

Paramount Studios has given the Voice Awards a home in the heart of the entertainment industry. As we continue our efforts to serve and to help others live better lives, know that our efforts are valuable and appreciated. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is committed to the continued efforts to improve the accountability, capacity and effectiveness of the nation's substance use prevention, addictions treatment, and mental health delivery systems. They are also committed to giving a voice to recovery. Hope and faith are essential components to recovery and both of those are evident in all the efforts of SAMHSA and its partners who work tirelessly year after year to promote health, wellness and recovery. I am proud to be a member of this amazing community.